

MADE TO STICK

BY CHIP HEATH AND DAN HEATH

CHAPTER 5: EMOTIONAL

Mother Teresa once said, “If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will.” In 2004, some researchers at Carnegie Mellon University decided to see whether most people act like Mother Teresa.

The researchers wanted to see how people responded to an opportunity to make a charitable contribution to an abstract cause versus a charitable contribution to a single person. They offered participants five dollars to complete a survey about their usage of various technology products. (The survey was irrelevant; the point was to ensure that the participants would have some cash on hand to consider donating to charity.)

When people finished the survey, they received their payment in five one-dollar bills. They also received, unexpectedly, an envelope and a charity-request letter giving them an opportunity to donate some of their money to Save the Children, a charity that focuses on the well-being of children worldwide.

The researchers tested two versions of the request letter. The first version featured statistics about the magnitude of the problems facing children in Africa, such as the following:

- Food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than 3 million children.
- In Zambia, severe rainfall deficits have resulted in a 42 percent drop in maize production from 2000. As a result, an estimated 3 million Zambians face hunger.
- Four million Angolans—one third of the population—have been forced to flee their homes.
- More than 11 million people in Ethiopia need immediate food assistance.

The other version of the letter gave information about a single young girl:

- Any money that you donate will go to Rokia, a seven-year-old girl from Mali, Africa. Rokia is desperately poor and faces the threat of severe hunger or even starvation. Her life will be changed for the better as a result of your financial gift. With your support, and the support of other caring sponsors, Save the Children will work with Rokia's family and other members of the community to help feed and educate her and provide basic medical care and hygiene education.

The researchers gave participants one of the two different letters, then left them alone. They chose how much money, if any, to put back into the envelope, then they sealed the envelope and handed it back to a researcher.

On average, the people who read the statistics contributed \$1.14. The people who read about Rokia contributed \$2.38—more than twice as much. It seems that most people have something in common with Mother Teresa: When it comes to our hearts, one individual trumps the masses.

The researchers believed that the smaller donations for the statistical letter could be a result of what they called the “drop in the bucket effect.” If people felt overwhelmed by the scale of the problem, their small donations might have seemed meaningless. But here's where things get even more interesting. The researchers decided to give a third group of people *both* sets of information—the statistics and the story about Rokia. The researchers wondered whether people who got all the information would give more, on average, than the \$2.38 that had been given by the Rokia group. Perhaps the combination of statistics and stories—the power of individual need coupled with the statistical scale of the problem—would inspire a whole new level of giving.

Nope. The people who received both letters gave \$1.43, almost a dollar less than the people who got the Rokia story alone. Somehow the statistics—evidence of massive human suffering in Africa—actually made people less charitable. What was going on? The researchers theorized that thinking about statistics shifts people into a more analytical frame of mind. When people think analytically, they're less likely to think emotionally. And the researchers believed it was people's emotional response to Rokia's plight that led them to act.

To prove this argument, they ran a second study. In this study they primed some people to think in an analytical way by asking questions such as, “If an object travels at five feet per minute, then by your calculations how many feet will it travel in 360 seconds?” Other people were primed

to think in terms of feelings: “Please write down one word to describe how you feel when you hear the word ‘baby.’ ” Then both groups were given the Rokia letter. And, confirming the researchers’ theory, the analytically primed people gave less. When people were primed to *feel* before they read about Rokia, they gave \$2.34, about the same as before. But when they were primed to *calculate* before they read about Rokia, they gave \$1.26.

These results are shocking. The mere *act of calculation* reduced people’s charity. Once we put on our analytical hat, we react to emotional appeals differently. We hinder our ability to feel.

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In the last chapter, we discussed how to convince people that our ideas are credible, how to make them believe. Belief counts for a lot, but belief isn’t enough. For people to take action, they have to *care*.

Everyone believes there is tremendous human suffering in Africa; there’s no doubt about the facts. But belief does not necessarily make people care enough to act. Everyone believes that eating lots of fatty food leads to health problems; there’s no doubt about the facts. But the belief does not make people care enough to act.

Charities have long since figured out the Mother Teresa effect—they know that donors respond better to individuals than to abstract causes. You don’t give to “African poverty,” you sponsor a specific child. (In fact, the idea of sponsoring a child as a charitable hook dates back to the 1950s, when a young Christian minister encouraged Americans to sponsor needy Korean orphans.) The concept works with animals, too. At Farm Sanctuary, a nonprofit organization that fights to reduce cruel treatment of farm animals, donors can “adopt a chicken” (\$10 per month), a goat (\$25), or a cow (\$50).

No one wants to donate to the General Administrative Fund of a charity. It’s easy to understand, intellectually, why general funds would be needed—someone’s got to buy the staples—but it’s hard to generate a lot of passion for office supplies.

Charities have learned how to arouse sympathy and compassion in donors—and thank goodness they’re good at it, because their skills ease a lot of suffering. But “making people care” isn’t something that only

charities need to do. Managers have to make people care enough to work long and hard on complex tasks. Teachers have to make students care about literature. Activists have to make people care about city council initiatives.

This chapter tackles the emotional component of stickiness, but it's not about pushing people's emotional buttons, like some kind of movie tearjerker. Rather, the goal of making messages "emotional" is to make people care. Feelings inspire people to act.

As an example, most teenagers believe that cigarette smoking is dangerous. There's no credibility problem with that message. Yet teenagers still take up smoking. So how do you transform their belief into action? You have to make them care. And, in 1998, someone finally figured out how to do that.

The Truth

The commercial starts with a shot of a city street in New York City. The footage is video, not film—it's a bit dark, a bit unprofessional. It feels like a documentary, not a commercial. A caption flashes at the bottom of the screen: "Outside the headquarters of a major tobacco company."

An eighteen-wheeler pulls up in front of the building, and a group of teenagers jump out. The teens begin to unload long white sacks marked "Body Bag." They stack the bags on top of one another near the edge of the building. As the commercial progresses, the pile of body bags gets bigger and bigger. By the end of the ad, there are hundreds of bags in the pile. One of the teens shouts at the building through a megaphone, "Do you know how many people tobacco kills every day?" The daily death toll is revealed to be 1,800—the number of body bags the teens have piled up in front of the tobacco headquarters.

This ad is part of a series of ads called the Truth campaign. The campaign was launched by the American Legacy Foundation, which was formed in November 1998 after forty-six state attorneys-general settled a lawsuit against major U.S. tobacco companies.

You can't watch the Truth ads without getting angry at tobacco companies. After the ads began airing, Philip Morris invoked a special Big Tobacco "anti-vilification" clause to have the spots yanked from the air. The tobacco companies inserted this clause in the settlements of a number of antitobacco lawsuits; it gives them some veto power over how the settlement money can be spent on antismoking advertising. "We felt

that [the Truth ads] are not consistent with the focus and mission of the American Legacy Foundation,” said Carolyn Levy, Philip Morris’s senior vice president for youth-smoking prevention, in reference to the censorship effort.

One translation of this complaint: The ads were working.

Meanwhile, another series of antismoking ads started to run. As part of the tobacco settlement, Philip Morris agreed to air its own series of antismoking ads. The Philip Morris tagline was “Think. Don’t Smoke.”

Two campaigns were launched, almost simultaneously, with two different approaches. This juxtaposition set up an exciting, head-to-head horse race in the marketplace of ideas. In fact, in June 2002, an article in the *American Journal of Public Health* surveyed 10,692 teenagers to compare the Truth campaign with “Think. Don’t Smoke.” It turns out that some horses run better than others. When kids were asked to recall any antitobacco advertising they had seen, the Truth campaign was remembered spontaneously by 22 percent of them; the Think campaign by 3 percent. What’s particularly striking about this statistic is that when the kids were *prompted* with information from the campaigns, more than 70 percent of them remembered seeing *both*. In other words, teens had seen both ads on TV, but one stuck better than the other. Something about the Truth campaign was spontaneously memorable.

Memory is important, but it’s only the first step. What about action? When the survey asked kids whether they were likely to smoke a cigarette during the next year, those who were exposed to the Truth campaign were 66 percent less likely to smoke. Those who were exposed to “Think. Don’t Smoke” were 36 percent *more* likely to smoke! Tobacco execs must have taken the news quite hard.

It wasn’t just surveys that registered the difference. A study measured teen smoking in Florida, where the Truth campaign had its debut, versus the rest of the country. After two years of the campaign, smoking among high school students dropped by 18 percent and among middle school students by 40 percent. (About half of this decline may have been associated with a rise in cigarette taxes during the time of the study.)

What happened here? It’s the Save the Children example revisited. What is the “Think. Don’t Smoke” campaign about? Er, thinking. It’s the Analytical Hat. Remember what happened with contributions to Rokia when donors were asked to think analytically before donating?

What's the Truth campaign about? It's about tapping into antiauthority resentment, the classic teenage emotion. Once, teens smoked to rebel against The Man. Thanks to the ingenious framing of the Truth campaign—which paints a picture of a duplicitous Big Tobacco—teens now rebel against The Man by *not* smoking.

The Truth campaign isn't about rational decision-making; it's about rebellion. And it made a lot of teens care enough to do something. In this case, that something was nothing.

Semantic Stretch and the Power of Association

So far we've been talking about what you might expect from a chapter on emotion—complex, fundamental human emotions like empathy (Rokia) and anger (the Truth). But the main question of this chapter is even more basic: How do we make people care about our messages? The good news is that to make people care about our ideas we don't have to produce emotion from an absence of emotion. In fact, many ideas use a sort of piggybacking strategy, associating themselves with emotions that already exist.

Consider the following sentence from a movie review: “*Rashomon* can be seen as a cinematic extension of Einstein's theory of relativity.” *Rashomon* is a classic 1950 film by the Japanese director Akira Kurosawa. In the film, four different characters describe the same event—a murder and rape—from their own perspectives. The movie is told in a series of flashbacks, as each of the characters recounts his or her version of events. But the characters' tales are self-serving and contradictory, and at the end of the movie the viewer is still uncertain about what actually happened. The movie questions the existence of absolute truth—or, at least, our ability to uncover it.

So the movie reviewer, in the quote above, was comparing *Rashomon's* “relative truth” to Einstein's theory of relativity. But Einstein's theory of relativity wasn't designed to say that “everything is relative.” In fact, its actual meaning was essentially the opposite. The theory was designed to explain how the laws of physics are *identical in every frame of reference*. From Einstein's view, things don't look unpredictable; they look surprisingly orderly.

Why did the reviewer link *Rashomon* with relativity? This reference doesn't look like an appeal to Einstein's authority; it claims that *Rashomon*

is the cinematic “equivalent” of Einstein’s theory. Instead, the analogy seems intended to create a sense of awe—when we watch *Rashomon*, it implies, we will be in the presence of something profound.

The theory of relativity is borrowed, as an association, because it lends an aura of emotional resonance—profundity, awe—to the movie. The movie review above is just one example among thousands. “Relativity” becomes, in a sense, a color on the idea palette. When you want to conjure up awe, you dab your brush into “relativity.” Other scientific terms—the “uncertainty principle,” “chaos theory,” the “quantum leap” of quantum mechanics—are also colors on this palette.

In 1929, Einstein protested, “Philosophers play with the word, like a child with a doll. . . . It does not mean that everything in life is relative.” To Einstein’s chagrin, the number of people trying to tap into the resonance of “relativity” began to exceed the number of people who were trying to understand relativity.

When associations to certain terms are drawn repeatedly—sometimes with precision, sometimes with crudeness—the effect is to dilute the power of the terms and their underlying concepts. When everyone paints with lime green, lime green no longer stands out.

Research conducted at Stanford and Yale shows that this process—exploiting terms and concepts for their emotional associations—is a common characteristic of communication. People tend to overuse any idea or concept that delivers an emotional kick. The research labeled this overuse “semantic stretch.”

Let’s look at a nonscientific example: the word “unique.” “Unique” used to mean one of a kind. “Unique” was special.

The researchers used a database to examine every newspaper article in each of the top fifty newspapers in the United States over a twenty-year period. During this time, the percentage of articles in which something was described as “unique” increased by 73 percent. So either there’s a lot more unique stuff in the world today or the “uniqueness bar” has been lowered.

Perhaps some skeptics, contemplating robot vacuum cleaners or Paris Hilton, would protest, “Hey, there *is* a lot more unique stuff in the world these days.” But at the same time that the word “unique” was rising in popularity, the word “unusual” was falling. In 1985, articles were more

than twice as likely to use the word “unusual” as the word “unique.” By 2005, the two words were about equally likely to be used.

Unique things should be a subset of unusual things—unique (i.e., one of a kind) is about as unusual as you can get. So if there really were more unique things today, we should see more “unusual” things as well. The fact that unusual things are getting less common makes the rise in unique things look like a case of semantic stretch. What we used to call “unusual” we now stretch and call “unique.”

So where’s the emotion in “relativity” and in “unique”? Here’s the punch line: The most basic way to make people care is to form an association between something they don’t yet care about and something they do care about. We all naturally practice the tactic of association. What “relativity” and “unique” teach us is that in using associations we can overuse colors. Over time, associations get overused and become diluted in value; people end up saying things like “This is really, truly unique.”

The superlatives of one generation—groovy, awesome, cool, phat—fade over time because they’ve been associated with too many things. When you hear your father call something “cool,” coolness loses its punch. When your finance professor starts using the word “dude,” you must eliminate the word from your vocabulary. Using associations, then, is an arms race of sorts. The other guy builds a missile, so you have to build two. If he’s “unique,” you’ve got to be “super-unique.”

This emotional-association arms race creates problems for people who are trying to make others care. In fact, as we’ll see, the arms race essentially bankrupted the term “sportsmanship.”

Fighting Semantic Stretch: The Case of “Sportsmanship”

In the last chapter, we discussed the coaching seminars held by Jim Thompson, the founder of the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA). Since 1988, when he founded the PCA, Thompson has struggled with an important problem. How do you clean up the bad behavior often associated with youth sports? In grappling with this problem, Thompson had to confront the issue of semantic stretch.

The tennis player John McEnroe was once the poster child of poor sportsmanship, with his racket-throwing and bratty arguments with officials. But today McEnroe’s behavior wouldn’t raise an eyebrow at many youth sports games. Bad behavior is now common not only among

athletes but also among parents and other spectators. According to the National Alliance for Youth Sports, nearly 15 percent of youth sports games involved a confrontation between parents or coaches and officials, up from 5 percent a few years ago.

Sportsmanship was once a powerful idea in athletics, but Thompson felt that it had become a weak term. “Sportsmanship trophies are seen as consolation prizes for losers,” he says. One woman told Thompson that her high school basketball coach said that if his players ever won a sportsmanship trophy, they’d have to run laps. Thompson adds, “Sportsmanship seems like it is mostly about not doing something bad: ‘Don’t yell at officials. Don’t break the rules.’ But it’s not enough to simply refuse to do bad things. We need to expect much more of participants in youth sports. Unfortunately, ‘Be a good sport!’ is not the rallying cry that we need to transform youth sports.”

Everyone enjoys hearing about real examples of good sportsmanship. Thompson uses the example of Lance Armstrong, who reacted unexpectedly when one of his chief opponents, Jan Ullrich, crashed during the Tour de France. Instead of taking advantage of this lucky break to increase his lead, Armstrong slowed down and waited for Ullrich to remount. He later said that he rode better when he was competing with a great athlete like Ullrich. *That’s* sportsmanship.

Thompson knew that people still admired the underlying ideals of sportsmanship. Parents *did* want their kids to learn respect and manners from athletics. Coaches *did* want to be mentors, not just victorious taskmasters. Kids *did* want their teams to be respected by others. All three groups sometimes slipped up and acted like jerks. But Thompson saw that the need and the desire for sportsmanship remained, even though the term “sportsmanship” had lost its ability to motivate good behavior.

“Sportsmanship” had been stretched too far. Like “relativity,” it had migrated far afield from its original meaning. It used to refer to the kind of behavior that Lance Armstrong showed Jan Ullrich. But over time the term was stretched to include unimpressive, nonchivalrous behavior, like losing without whining too much or making it through an entire game without assaulting a referee.

Thompson and the PCA needed a different way of encouraging people, not just to avoid bad behavior but to embrace good behavior. They called it Honoring the Game. People care about sports, they care about

the Game. It's a way of making the point that the Game and its integrity are *larger* than the individual participants. "Honoring the Game" is a kind of sports patriotism. It implies that you *owe your sport* basic respect. Armstrong wasn't being a "good sport"; he was Honoring the Game. And Honoring the Game also works for people other than players. It reminds anyone that sports is a civic institution. It's unseemly to mess with an institution. It's dishonorable.

Is there any proof that Honoring the Game works? Consider the data gathered by a basketball league in Dallas, Texas: "In the 2002 basketball season, on average there was a technical foul called every fifteen games. Since that time, we've conducted six Double-Goal Coach workshops. In the 2004 basketball season, there was a technical foul called every fifty-two games." A baseball league in Northern California found that after Positive Coaching training, there was a dramatic reduction (90 percent!) in the number of people who were ejected from games for bad behavior. Team morale improved so much that the number of players enrolling in the league increased by 20 percent. The only complaint was that they were running out of fields.

Thompson doesn't want to change just the culture of youth sports. He wants to change the culture of all sports: "I have a fantasy. I'm watching the World Series and a manager comes rushing onto the field to berate an umpire who made a call he disagrees with. On national TV, Bob Costas says, 'That's really too bad to see the manager dishonoring the game of baseball that way.'" (As a side note, notice how wonderfully concrete this vision is.)

Youth sports hasn't been purged of discourtesy, but Thompson is making a tangible difference in the places he's reached. And, with Honoring the Game, he has managed to sidestep semantic stretch and peg an idea that makes people care.

The lesson for the rest of us is that if we want to make people care, we've got to tap into the things they care about. When everybody taps into the same thing, an arms race emerges. To avoid it, we've either got to shift onto new turf, as Thompson did, or find associations that are distinctive for our ideas.

Appealing to Self-Interest

We're searching for ways to make people care about our ideas—to make them care about the African child Rokia, about smoking, about charity,

about sportsmanship. We make people care by appealing to the things that matter to them.

And what matters to people? So far, we've dealt with associations, but there's a more direct answer. In fact, it might be the most obvious answer of all. What matters to people? People matter to themselves. It will come as no surprise that one reliable way of making people care is by invoking self-interest.

In 1925, John Caples was assigned to write a headline for an advertisement promoting the correspondence music course offered by the U.S. School of Music. Caples had no advertising experience, but he was a natural. He sat at his typewriter and pecked out the most famous headline in print-advertising history: "They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano . . . But When I Started to Play!"

This is a classic underdog story in fifteen words. People *laughed at him!* And he *shut them up* through his playing! (The headline is enthralling enough that it makes us overlook commonsense reactions like, Um, why would anyone laugh at someone sitting down at a piano? When was the last time *you* laughed at someone who sat down at a piano?)

The headline was so successful at selling correspondence courses that it's still being ripped off by copywriters decades later. Sixty years later, the following knockoff headline increased sales by 26 percent over the previous year: "My Husband Laughed When I Ordered Our Carpet Through the Mail. But When I Saved 50% . . ." (Our publisher rejected the following subtitle for this book: "They Laughed When We Wrote This Book. But When They Woke Up in an Ice-Filled Bathtub . . .")

Caples helped establish mail-order advertising, the forerunner of the modern infomercial. In mail-order advertising, unlike most other forms of advertising, advertisers know *exactly* how well an ad works. Say there's an ad for a "stock-picking guide" in a newspaper or a magazine. If you want to order the stock-picking guide, you send off a check to the address listed in the ad. But each version of an ad lists a slightly different address, so when your order shows up at a particular address the marketer knows precisely which ad generated the sale.

Contrast mail-order ads with a classic consumer product like Crest. Why does someone buy a tube of Crest? Is it because of the new TV ads? Or was it the discount price at retail? Or the fancy new package design? Or the fact that Mom always used Crest? Or that it was the only brand in stock that day? Marketers have surprisingly little ability to tell.

Because mail-order advertising is so transparent, it's essentially a laboratory for assessing motivational appeals. What makes people care? Ask a direct-mail copywriter. And John Caples is often cited as the greatest copywriter of all time. He says, "First and foremost, try to get self-interest into every headline you write. Make your headline suggest to readers that here is something they want. This rule is so fundamental that it would seem obvious. Yet the rule is violated every day by scores of writers."

Caples's ads get self-interest into their headlines by promising huge benefits for trivial costs:

- You Can Laugh at Money Worries if You Follow This Simple Plan
- Give Me 5 Days and I'll Give You a Magnetic Personality . . . Let Me Prove It—Free
- The Secret of How to Be Taller
- How You Can Improve Your Memory in One Evening
- Retire at 55

Caples says companies often emphasize features when they should be emphasizing benefits. "The most frequent reason for unsuccessful advertising is advertisers who are so full of their own accomplishments (the world's best seed!) that they forget to tell us why *we* should buy (the world's best lawn!)." An old advertising maxim says you've got to spell out *the benefit of the benefit*. In other words, people don't buy quarter-inch drill bits. They buy quarter-inch holes so they can hang their children's pictures.

We get uncomfortable looking at Caples's handiwork: Many of his ads are shady. Deceptive. The manufacturers of the Magnetic Personality Kit may enjoy a conscience-free existence, but most of us aspire to a working relationship with the truth.

So what's the nonadvertising, nonschlocky takeaway from the Caples techniques? The first lesson is not to overlook self-interest. Jerry Weissman, a former TV producer and screenwriter who now coaches CEOs in how to deliver speeches, says that you shouldn't dance around the appeal to self-interest. He says that the WIFY—"what's in it for you," pronounced *whiff-y*—should be a central aspect of every speech.

Weissman notes that some people resist spelling out the message. "But my audiences aren't stupid," he quotes the resisters. "They might even feel insulted if I spell it out for them!" For an audience that may be

distracted, though, spelling it out has value: “Even if it takes them just a few seconds to connect the dots between the feature you describe and the implied benefit, by the time they catch up, you will have moved on to your next point, and they probably won’t have time to absorb the benefit . . . or the next point.”

Teachers are all too familiar with the student refrain “How are we ever going to *use* this?” In other words, what’s in it for me? If the WIIFY was that algebra made students better at video games, would any teacher hesitate to say so? Does any teacher doubt that students would pay more attention?

If you’ve got self-interest on your side, don’t bury it. Don’t talk around it. Even subtle tweaks can make a difference. It’s important, Caples says, to keep the self in self-interest: “Don’t say, ‘People will enjoy a sense of security when they use Goodyear Tires.’ Say, ‘*You* enjoy a sense of security when you use Goodyear Tires.’ ”

Of course, there are less obnoxious, less overt ways to appeal to self-interest than those promoted by mail-order ads. To explore this, we’ll start with a rather odd study conducted in Tempe, Arizona.

Cable TV in Tempe

In 1982, psychologists conducted a study on persuasion with a group of homeowners in Tempe, Arizona. The homeowners were visited by student volunteers who asked them to fill out surveys for a class project.

At the time, cable TV was just starting to appear—it was still unfamiliar to most people. The research study was designed to compare the success of two different approaches to educating the homeowners about the potential benefits of cable TV.

One group of homeowners was presented with some information about why cable might be worthwhile:

CATV will provide a broader entertainment and informational service to its subscribers. Used properly, a person can plan in advance to enjoy events offered. Instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and putting up with the hassles of going out, more time can be spent at home with family, alone, or with friends.

The second group of homeowners was asked to imagine themselves in a detailed scenario:

Take a moment and imagine how CATV will provide you with a broader entertainment and informational service. When you use it properly, you will be able to plan in advance which of the events offered you wish to enjoy. Take a moment and think of how, instead of spending money on the babysitter and gas, and then having to put up with the hassles of going out, you will be able to spend your time at home, with your family, alone, or with your friends.

Some readers have said that at first they didn't see any difference between the two appeals. The difference *is* subtle. But go back and count up the number of times the word "you" appears in each appeal.

In a sense, the study was a more elaborate version of Caples's advice to avoid talking about abstract benefits ("People will enjoy a sense of security when they use Goodyear Tires") and focus on personal benefits ("*You* enjoy a sense of security when you use Goodyear Tires"). The Arizona study, though, took it a step further. It asked people to *visualize* the feeling of security they would get by using Goodyear tires.

The homeowners filled out a questionnaire for the students and said goodbye. They thought they were finished with the research project, but the researchers still had another stage to complete. A month after the survey was conducted, cable TV arrived in Tempe. The local cable company approached the homeowners for subscriptions. The university researchers managed to get subscriber data from the cable company. They then analyzed which homeowners had subscribed and which hadn't.

The homeowners who got information about cable subscribed at a rate of 20 percent, which was about the same as the rest of the neighborhood. But the homeowners who *imagined themselves* subscribing to cable subscribed at a rate of 47 percent. The research paper, when it was published, was subtitled "Does Imagining Make It So?" The answer was yes.

Compared with a typical mail-order ad, the "imagine cable television" appeal is a much more subtle appeal to self-interest. Note that the benefits offered were not fantastic in a Caples-esque way. The gist was that you could avoid the hassle of leaving home (!) by ordering cable. Indeed, just hearing about the benefits, in the abstract, wasn't enough to lure additional subscribers. It was only when people put themselves in the starring role—I can see myself watching a good *movie at home with my hubby, and I can get up and check on the kids in the next room whenever*

I like . . . and think of all that babysitting money I'd save!—that their interest grew.

This finding suggests that it may be the tangibility, rather than the magnitude, of the benefits that makes people care. You don't have to promise riches and sex appeal and magnetic personalities. It may be enough to promise reasonable benefits that *people can easily imagine themselves enjoying*.

Imagine that Save the Children incorporated this idea into its pitches for sponsorship. Right now the pitch is “You can sponsor Rokia, a little girl in Mali, for \$30 per month”—a pitch that is already successful. But what if the pitch was expanded? “Imagine yourself as the sponsor of Rokia, a little girl in Mali. You've got a picture of her on your desk at work, next to your kids' pictures. During the past year you've traded letters with her three times, and you know from the letters that she loves to read and frequently gets annoyed by her little brother. She is excited that next year she'll get to play on the soccer team.” That's powerful. (And it's not crass.)

Maslow

Self-interest isn't the whole story, of course—especially if we define “selfinterest” narrowly, as we often do, in terms of wealth and security. If it were the whole story, no one would ever serve in the armed forces. There are things people care about that would never appear in a Caples ad.

In 1954, a psychologist named Abraham Maslow surveyed the research in psychology about what motivates people. He boiled down volumes of existing research to a list of needs and desires that people try to fulfill:

- Transcendence: help others realize their potential
- Self-actualization: realize our own potential, self-fulfillment, peak experiences
- Aesthetic: symmetry, order, beauty, balance
- Learning: know, understand, mentally connect
- Esteem: achieve, be competent, gain approval, independence, status
- Belonging: love, family, friends, affection
- Security: protection, safety, stability
- Physical: hunger, thirst, bodily comfort

You may remember this list as Maslow's Pyramid, or Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's list of needs was incredibly insightful, but he was wrong to describe it as a "hierarchy." Maslow saw the hierarchy as a ladder—to be climbed rung by rung from the bottom up. You couldn't fill your longing for Esteem until you satisfied your longing for Security. You couldn't fill your Aesthetic needs until your Physical needs were taken care of. (In Maslow's world, there were no starving artists.)

Subsequent research suggests that the hierarchical aspect of Maslow's theory is bogus—people pursue all of these needs pretty much simultaneously. There's no question that most starving men would rather eat than transcend, but there's an awful lot of overlap in the middle.

When people talk about "self-interest," they're typically invoking the Physical, Security, and Esteem layers. Sometimes Belonging gets acknowledged if the speaker is touchy-feely. Not many marketers or managers venture far beyond these categories. Even ap-peals that seem to fall under the Aesthetic category are often really Esteem-related, but in disguise (e.g., a luxury-auto ad).

There could be a very good reason that people focus on those particular categories. Maybe those are the ones that truly matter. The rest of them—Self-actualization, Transcendence, and so on—do seem a bit academic. Recent research has explored this question, helping to shed light on which of Maslow's categories made people care.

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Imagine that a company offers its employees a \$1,000 bonus if they meet certain performance targets. There are three different ways of presenting the bonus to the employees:

1. Think of what that \$1,000 means: a down payment on a new car or that new home improvement you've been wanting to make.
2. Think of the increased security of having that \$1,000 in your bank account for a rainy day.
3. Think of what the \$1,000 means: the company recognizes how important you are to its overall performance. It doesn't spend money for nothing.

When people are asked which positioning would appeal to them personally, most of them say No. 3. It's good for the self-esteem—and, as for No. 1 and No. 2, isn't it kind of obvious that \$1,000 can be spent or saved? Most of us have no trouble at all visualizing ourselves spending

\$1,000. (It's a bit less common to find people who like to visualize themselves saving.)

Here's the twist, though: When people are asked which is the best positioning for *other people* (not them), they rank No. 1 most fulfilling, followed by No. 2. That is, *we* are motivated by self-esteem, but *others* are motivated by down payments. This single insight explains almost everything about the way incentives are structured in most large organizations.

Or consider another version of the same task. Let's say you're trying to persuade someone to take a new job in a department that's crucial to the company's success. Here are three possible pitches for the new job:

1. Think about how much security this job provides. It's so important that the company will always need someone in this job.
2. Think about the visibility provided by this job. Because the job is so important, a lot of people will be watching your performance.
3. Think about how rewarding it will be to work in such a central job. It offers a unique opportunity to learn how the company really works.

The chasm between ourselves and others opens again. Most people say No. 3—an appeal to Learning—would be most motivating for them. Those same people predict that others would be most motivated by No. 1 (Security) and No. 2 (Esteem).

In other words, a lot of us think everyone else is living in Maslow's basement—we may have a penthouse apartment, but everyone else is living below. The result of spending too much time in Maslow's basement is that we may overlook lots of opportunities to motivate people. It's not that the "bottom floors"—or the more tangible, physical needs, to avoid the hierarchy metaphor—aren't motivational. Of course they are. We all like to get bonuses and to have job security and to feel like we fit in. But to focus on these needs exclusively robs us of the chance to tap more profound motivations.

A great example of using these more profound motivations involves a retired member of the U.S. Army—not a battlefield commander but a guy who ran a mess hall.

Dining in Iraq

Army food is just about what you'd expect: bland, overcooked, and prepared in massive quantities. The dishes are not garnished with sprigs of parsley. The mess halls are essentially calorie factories, giving the troops the fuel they need to do their jobs. An old Army proverb says, "An Army travels on its stomach."

The Pegasus chow hall, just outside the Baghdad airport, has developed a different reputation. At Pegasus, the prime rib is perfectly prepared. The fruit platter is a beautiful assortment of watermelon, kiwi fruit, and grapes. There are legends of soldiers driving to Pegasus from the Green Zone (the well-protected Americanized area of Baghdad), along one of the most treacherous roads in Iraq, just to eat a meal.

Floyd Lee, the man in charge of Pegasus, was retired from his twenty-five-year career as a Marine Corps and Army cook when the Iraq war began. He came out of retirement to take the job. "The good Lord gave me a second chance to feed soldiers," he said. "I've waited for this job all my life, and here I am in Baghdad."

Lee is well aware that being a soldier is relentlessly difficult. The soldiers often work eighteen-hour days, seven days a week. The threat of danger in Iraq is constant. Lee wants Pegasus to provide a respite from the turmoil. He's clear about his leadership mission: "As I see it, I am not just in charge of food service; I am in charge of morale."

Think about that: *I am in charge of morale*. In terms of Maslow's hierarchy, Lee is going for Transcendence.

This vision manifests itself in hundreds of small actions taken by Lee's staff on a daily basis. At Pegasus, the white walls of the typical mess hall are covered with sports banners. There are gold treatments on the windows, and green tablecloths with tassels. The harsh fluorescent lights have been replaced by ceiling fans with soft bulbs. The servers wear tall white chef's hats.

The remarkable thing about Pegasus's reputation for great food is that Pegasus works with exactly the same raw materials that everyone else does. Pegasus serves the same twenty-one-day Army menu as other dining halls. Its food comes from the same suppliers. It's the attitude that makes the difference. A chef sorts through the daily fruit shipment, culling the bad grapes, selecting the best parts of the watermelon and kiwi, to prepare the perfect fruit tray. At night, the dessert table features

five kinds of pie and three kinds of cake. The Sunday prime rib is marinated for two full days. A cook from New Orleans orders spices that are mailed to Iraq to enhance the entrées. A dessert chef describes her strawberry cake as “sexual and sensual”—two adjectives never before applied to Army food.

Lee realizes that serving food is a job, but improving morale is a mission. Improving morale involves creativity and experimentation and mastery. Serving food involves a ladle.

One of the soldiers who commute to Pegasus for Sunday dinner said, “The time you are in here, you forget you’re in Iraq.” Lee is tapping into Maslow’s forgotten categories—the Aesthetic, Learning, and Transcendence needs. In redefining the mission of his mess hall, he has inspired his co-workers to create an oasis in the desert.

The Popcorn Popper and Political Science

Even John Caples, the mail-order copywriter, admits that there are powerful motivations outside narrow self-interest. He tells a story about a marketer who was promoting a new educational film on fire safety that was intended to help firemen. This marketer had been taught that there are three basic consumer appeals: sex, greed, and fear.

The marketer’s instinct was that greed would work best in this situation. He came up with a couple of ideas for free giveaways that would persuade firemen to check out the film. He began calling local units to figure out which giveaway would have the most appeal. When he called, he would describe the new film and ask, “Would you like to see the film for possible purchase for your educational programs?” The universal answer was an enthusiastic “Yes!”

The second question tested two versions of his greed appeal: “Would your firefighters prefer a large electric popcorn popper or an excellent set of chef’s carving knives as a thank-you for reviewing the film?”

The first two calls yielded definitive answers to this question: “Do you think we’d use a fire safety program because of some #*\$@%! popcorn popper?!”

The marketer stopped asking about the free gifts.

So, sometimes self-interest helps people care, and sometimes it backfires. What are we to make of this?

The mystery deepens if we consider politics. The conventional wisdom is that voters are paragons of self-interest. If there's a proposal on the table to raise the marginal tax rate on the highest incomes, we expect rich people to vote against it and everyone else to vote for it.

Actually, this conventional wisdom is wrong. There's not much evidence that public opinion can be predicted by narrow self-interest. In 1998, Donald Kinder, a professor of political science at the University of Michigan, wrote an influential survey of thirty years of research on this topic. He summarizes the effects of self-interest on political views as "trifling." Trifling! Kinder writes:

When faced with affirmative action, white and black Americans come to their views without calculating personal harms or benefits. The unemployed do not line up behind policies designed to alleviate economic distress. The medically needy are no more likely to favor government health insurance than the fully insured. Parents of children in public schools are not more likely to support government aid to education than other citizens. Americans who are likely to be drafted are not more likely to oppose military intervention or escalating conflicts that are under way. Women employed outside the home do not differ from homemakers in their support of policies intended to benefit women at work. On such diverse matters as racial busing for the purpose of school desegregation, anti-drinking ordinances, mandatory college examinations, housing policy, bilingual education, compliance with laws, satisfaction with the resolution of legal disputes, gun control and more, self-interest turns out to be quite unimportant.

These findings are bracingly counterintuitive. If people aren't supporting their own self-interest, whose interests are they supporting?

The answer is nuanced. First, self-interest does seem to matter, quite a bit, when the effects of a public policy are significant, tangible, and immediate. For example, in California in 1978, a ballot initiative called Proposition 13 called for a sharp reduction in property taxes in exchange for equally sharp reductions in public services such as schools, libraries, and police and fire departments. On this issue, homeowners—tired of the huge tax increases that accompany rising property values—voted for Proposition 13. Librarians and firefighters, among others, voted against it. Second, self-interest shapes what we pay attention to, even if it doesn't dictate our stance. For example, on Proposition 13 homeowners and public employees were more likely to have a well-formed opinion on the

initiative—even if their opinion was inconsistent with their personal self-interest.

But self-interest isn't the whole story. Principles—equality, individualism, ideals about government, human rights, and the like—may matter to us even when they violate our immediate self-interest. We may dislike hearing the views of some fringe political group but support its right to speak because we treasure free speech.

And perhaps the most important part of the story is this: “Group interest” is often a better predictor of political opinions than self interest. Kinder says that in forming opinions people seem to ask not “What’s in it for me?” but, rather, “What’s in it for my group?” Our group affiliation may be based on race, class, religion, gender, region, political party, industry, or countless other dimensions of difference.

A related idea comes from James March, a professor at Stanford University, who proposes that we use two basic models to make decisions. The first model involves calculating consequences. We weigh our alternatives, assessing the value of each one, and we choose the alternative that yields us the most value. This model is the standard view of decision-making in economics classes: People are self-interested and rational. The rational agent asks, Which sofa will provide me with the greatest comfort and the best aesthetics for the price? Which political candidate will best serve my economic and social interests? The second model is quite different. It assumes that people make decisions based on identity. They ask themselves three questions: Who am I? What kind of situation is this? And what do people like me do in this kind of situation?

Notice that in the second model people aren't analyzing the consequences or outcomes for themselves. There are no calculations, only norms and principles. Which sofa would someone like me—a Southeastern accountant—be more likely to buy? Which political candidate should a Hollywood Buddhist get behind? It's almost as if people consulted an ideal self-image: *What would someone like me do?*

This second model of decision-making helps shed light on why the firefighters got angry about the popcorn popper. Bear in mind that the popcorn popper wasn't a bribe. If the marketer had said, “Order this film for your firehouse and I'll give you a popcorn popper for your family,” clearly most people would reject the offer on ethical grounds. On the contrary, the offer was innocuous: *We will give you a popcorn popper to*

thank you for the trouble you're taking to review the film. You can have the popper regardless of your decision on the film.

There's nothing unethical about accepting this offer.

And we can go further than that: From a self-interested, value-maximizing point of view, it is simply stupid to turn down this offer. If you make Decision A, you end up with a popcorn popper. If you make Decision B, you end up with no popcorn popper. Everything else is the same. So unless popcorn destroys value in your world, you'd better make Decision A.

But from the perspective of the identity model of decision-making, turning down the popper makes perfect sense. The thought process would be more like this: "I'm a firefighter. You're offering me a popcorn popper to get me to view a film on safety. But firefighters aren't the kind of people who need little gifts to motivate us to learn about safety. We risk our lives, going into burning buildings to save people. Shame on you for implying that I need a popcorn popper!"

There are ways to unite these two decision models. What if the marketer had offered to donate fifty dollars to a school's fire-safety program in exchange for the firemen's viewing the film? It's less clear that this offer would have violated the firefighters' sense of identity. Self-interest is important. There's no question that we can make people care by appealing to it. But it makes for a limited palette. Always structuring our ideas around self-interest is like always painting with one color. It's stifling for us and uninspiring for others.

Floyd Lee, the manager of the Pegasus dining hall, has it right. He could have generated motivation through a strict self-interest appeal: perhaps by offering to let his employees off ten minutes early every night if they worked hard, or by giving them the first choice of the steaks. Instead, he helped create a kind of Pegasus identity: *A Pegasus chef is in charge of morale, not food. You can imagine hundreds of decisions being made by staffers in the tent who think to themselves, What should a Pegasus person do in this situation?*

Clinic

The Need for Algebra and Maslow's Basement

THE SITUATION: Every algebra teacher in recorded history has had to *deal with two student questions: “Why do I need to know this? When will I ever use this?”* This Clinic examines three attempts to answer these questions.

MESSAGE 1: In a 1993 conference on “Algebra for All,” the following points were made in response to the question “Why study algebra?”

- Algebra provides methods for moving from the specific to the general. It involves discovering the patterns among items in a set and developing the language needed to think about and communicate it to others.
- Algebra provides procedures for manipulating symbols to allow for understanding of the world around us.
- Algebra provides a vehicle for understanding our world through mathematical models.
- Algebra is the science of variables. It enables us to deal with large bodies of data by identifying variables (quantities which change in value) and by imposing or finding structures within the data.
- Algebra is the basic set of ideas and techniques for describing and reasoning about relations between variable quantities.

COMMENTS ON MESSAGE 1: This message illustrates the problems posed by the Curse of Knowledge. Presumably, this conference was filled with a group of algebra experts and they came up with an answer that seemed plausible to other experts. But let’s get real: Will any restless student jump on the algebra bandwagon after being told that it “provides procedures for manipulating symbols to allow for understanding of the world”? As a *definition* of algebra, the bullets above seem quite logical. But as *reasons* for studying algebra, they don’t work. We need a message that makes students care about algebra.

MESSAGE 2: We made up the following response. It was inspired by several examples that we saw floating around the Internet:

Here’s what I tell my students about why they need to learn algebra:

- You need it to get your high school diploma.

- Every future math and science class you take will require a knowledge of algebra.
- To get admitted to a good college, you'll need a good record in math.
- And even if you don't ever plan to attend college, the reasoning skills you learn in algebra will help you buy a home, create a budget, etc.

My brother is a sales rep for a high-tech firm . . . he always had trouble with math in school but now realizes the hard work he put into the course has improved his analytical skills and has made him a better presenter to his clients.

COMMENTS ON MESSAGE 2: This teacher avoids the Curse of Knowledge by speaking practically, but he stays close to Maslow's Basement. Why study algebra? The first reason: You have to do it because you have to do it. The second: You have to do it so that you can do more of it. The primary appeal is to Esteem—the desire to be competent, to gain approval and status. The most effective part is the part about the author's brother, who later realized that his struggles with math paid off. The brother story is an Esteem appeal that builds in an almost Caples-esque victory story. (“They laughed when I botched the equation, but when I won the account . . .”)

MESSAGE 3: This is a response from a high school algebra teacher, Dean Sherman, to an Internet discussion of this topic among high school teachers:

My grade 9 students have difficulty appreciating the usefulness of the Standard Form of the equation of a line, prompting them to ask, “When are we ever going to need this?”

This question used to really bother me, and I would look, as a result, for justification for everything I taught. Now I say, “Never. You will never use this.”

I then go on to remind them that people don't lift weights so that they will be prepared should, one day, [someone] knock them over on the street and lay a barbell across their chests. You lift weights so that you can knock over a defensive lineman, or carry your groceries or lift your grandchildren without being sore the next day. You do math exercises so that you can improve your ability to think logically, so that you can be a better lawyer, doctor, architect, prison warden or parent.

MATH IS MENTAL WEIGHT TRAINING. It is a means to an end (for most people), not an end in itself.

COMMENTS ON MESSAGE 3: This is a great response. Note the elements we've seen before in the book: The surprise opening to grab attention ("Never. You will never use this"). Also, the use of analogy is brilliant—he taps our existing schema of weight lifting to change our model of "learning algebra" (i.e., it's not that in the future you're going to have a daily need to find the slope of a line; it's that you're making your brain more muscular).

He is also moving up Maslow's hierarchy. The appeal here is to higher levels like Learning and Self-actualization. The idea is that learning algebra makes you realize more of your potential.

S C O R E C A R D

Checklist	Msg. 1	Msg. 2	Msg. 3
Simple	-	-	□
Unexpected	-	-	□
Concrete	-	-	□
Credible	-	-	-
Emotional	-	□	□ □
Story	-	□	-

PUNCH LINE: "Math is mental weight training" reminds us that, even in the most mundane situations, there's an opportunity to move out of Maslow's basement and into the higher levels of motivation.

Don't Mess with Texas

Dan Syrek is the nation's leading researcher on litter. He has worked with sixteen states—from New York to Alaska—on antilitter initiatives. He often begins his projects by selecting random stretches of road—from interstates to farm roads—and walking the roads personally, a clicker in each hand, manually counting litter.

In the 1980s, Syrek and his Sacramento-based organization, the Institute for Applied Research, were hired by the state of Texas. Texas had a serious litter problem. The state was spending \$25 million per year on cleanup, and the costs were rising 15 percent per year. The state's attempts to encourage better behavior—"Please Don't Litter" signs, lots of roadside trash cans marked "Pitch In"—weren't working. Texas hired Syrek to help craft a new strategy.

The standard antilitter message is emotional, but it tends to focus on a limited set of emotions. There are appeals to guilt and shame, as in a spot that shows a Native American shedding a tear over litter. There are also appeals to our feelings for cuddly wildlife, such as the campaign starring a cartoon owl who says, "Give a Hoot—Don't Pollute."

Syrek knew that this type of messaging wouldn't solve Texas's problem. In his view, those kinds of ads are just "preaching to the choir." What Texas needed to do was reach people who weren't inclined to shed tears over roadside trash. The profile of the typical litterer in Texas was an eighteen- to thirty-five-year-old, pickup-driving male who liked sports and country music. He didn't like authority and he wasn't motivated by emotional associations with cuddly owls. One member of the Texas Department of Transportation said, "Saying 'please' to these guys falls on deaf ears."

"We found that people who throw the stuff are real slobs," Syrek says. "You had to explain to them that what they were doing was littering." Syrek kept with him a photo of a macho-looking man in a pickup truck. "This is our target market," he said. "We call him Bubba."

Designing an antilitter campaign based on self-interest wasn't likely to work with this group. After all, what do the Bubbas really have to gain by not littering? Throwing things away properly takes effort, for which there are no obvious rewards. The situation doesn't lend itself to a greed or sex-based appeal, à la Caples. It might be possible to design a fear-based approach—highlighting hefty fines or other punishments—but the Bubbas' antiauthority streak would likely render it useless (or even cause it to backfire).

Syrek knew that the best way to change Bubba's behavior was to convince him that *people like him* did not litter. Based on his research, the Texas Department of Transportation approved a campaign built around the slogan "Don't Mess with Texas."

One of the earliest TV commercials featured two Dallas Cowboy players who were famous in Texas: defensive end Ed “Too-Tall” Jones and defensive tackle Randy White. In the spot, they’re picking up trash on the side of a highway:

Too-Tall Jones steps toward the camera and says, “You see the guy who threw this out the window . . . you tell him I got a message for him.”

Randy White steps forward with a beer can and says, “I got a message for him too . . .”

An off-camera voice asks, “What’s that?”

White crushes the can with his fist and says threateningly, “Well, I kinda need to see him to deliver it.”

Too-Tall Jones adds, “Don’t mess with Texas.”

This commercial is a far cry from cute owls and weepy Native Americans. Another ad features Houston Astros pitcher Mike Scott, famous for his split-fingered fastball. Scott says that throwing stuff away is “the Texas thing to do.” He demonstrates his “split-fingered trashball,” hurling some litter into a roadside can, which explodes with a pillar of fire. Subtle stuff.

The campaign featured athletes and musicians, most of whom probably weren’t household names outside Texas but were all wellknown to Texans as *Texans*: Houston Oiler quarterback Warren Moon, boxer George Foreman, blues guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan, and country artist Jerry Jeff Walker. Willie Nelson contributed an ad with the line “Mamas, tell all your babies, ‘Don’t mess with Texas.’ ”

But isn’t this just a garden-variety celebrity endorsement? No, it’s more subtle than that. Certainly, the spots are not driven by pure celebrity—Barbra Streisand wouldn’t pack much of a punch with Bubba. And even macho celebrities wouldn’t have worked the same way. Schwarzenegger is macho but does nothing to evoke Texanness.

What if the campaign used the same celebrities but adopted a more conventional PSA-type approach? “I’m pro boxer George Foreman. It’s uncool to litter.” That, too, would be unlikely to work: Foreman would be stepping into the authority role that Bubba hates.

The message of the campaign was *Texans don’t litter*. Notice that the celebrities are valuable only insofar as they can quickly establish the schema of “Texas”—or, more specifically, of “ideal, masculine Texans.”

Even people who dislike Willie Nelson's music can appreciate his quality of Texan-ness.

The campaign was an instant success. Within a few months of the launch, an astonishing 73 percent of Texans polled could recall the message and identify it as an antilitter message. Within one year, litter had declined 29 percent.

The Department of Transportation originally planned to accompany the "Don't Mess with Texas" campaign with a separate \$1 million program to enforce litter laws more vigorously. This was a fear tactic: If you litter, you're more likely to get caught and prosecuted. But the effect of "Don't Mess with Texas" was so strong and immediate that the enforcement program was abandoned. By offering Bubba a compelling message about identity, the campaign made appeals to fear unnecessary.

During the first five years of the campaign, visible roadside litter in Texas decreased 72 percent and the number of cans along Texas roads dropped 81 percent. In 1988, Syrek found that Texas had less than half the trash he found along the roads of other states that had run antilitter programs for comparable periods.

"Don't Mess with Texas," as a phrase, is a great slogan. But we shouldn't confuse the slogan with the idea. The idea was that Syrek could make Bubba care about litter by showing him that real Texans didn't litter. The idea was that Bubba would respond to an identity appeal better than he would to a rational self-interest appeal. Even if a second-rate copywriter had been hired, and the slogan had been "Don't Disrespect Texas," the campaign would still have decreased cans on Texas highways.

The Music of Duo Piano

So far we've looked at three strategies for making people care: using associations (or avoiding associations, as the case may be), appealing to self-interest, and appealing to identity. All three strategies can be effective, but we've got to watch out for our old nemesis, the Curse of Knowledge, which can interfere with our ability to implement them.

In 2002, Chip helped a group of professors lead a seminar for nonprofit arts leaders in Miami and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. One of the exercises was intended to help the leaders articulate and refine the core mission of their organization. The questions put to the attendees were difficult ones: Why does your organization exist? Can other organizations do what you do—and if so, what is it you do that is unique?

One question asked participants to define the purpose of their organization in a way that would motivate other people to care about it. Volunteers must care enough to contribute their time, donors must care enough to donate their money, and employees must care enough to stick by the organization (even when they get lucrative job offers from other, for-profit organizations). One of the organizations attending the seminar was the Murray Dranoff Duo Piano Foundation. When it was their turn, Chip asked the representatives to read their emotion-evoking purpose statement:

Duo Piano group: We exist to protect, preserve, and promote the music of duo piano.

Chip: Why is it important to protect the music of duo piano?

Duo Piano group: Well, not much duo piano music is being performed anymore. We want to keep it from dying out.

One attendee admitted later that when he first heard the phrase “duo piano” he immediately thought of the “dueling pianos” that you find in touristy bars, with people drunkenly singing along to “Piano Man.” Some people in the room thought that perhaps the death of duo piano music should not be prevented but hastened.

The conversation went around in circles for a few minutes without much progress in making the people in the room care about duo piano as an art form. Finally, one of the other participants chimed in: I don’t want to be rude, but why would the world be a less rich place if duo piano music disappeared completely?

Duo Piano group: (Clearly taken aback). Wow . . . The piano is this magnificent instrument. It was created to put the entire range and tonal quality of the whole orchestra under the control of one performer. There is no other instrument that has the same breadth and range.

And when you put two of these magnificent instruments in the same room, and the performers can respond to each other and build on each other, it’s like having the sound of the orchestra but the intimacy of chamber music.

At that point, surprise brows went up around the room and there was an audible murmur of approval. This phrase—“the sound of the orchestra but the intimacy of chamber music”—was profound and evocative. Suddenly

the people in the room *understood*, for the first time, why the Murray Dranoff team was, and should be, committed to the duo piano.

Why did it take ten minutes for the Murray Dranoff group to come up with a message that made other people care? You'd think that a group devoted to the duo piano would be in the best position of anyone on earth to explain the value of the music.

The reality is that they *did* in fact know better than anyone on earth why the duo piano was worth preserving. But the Curse of Knowledge prevented them from expressing it well. The mission to "preserve duo piano music" was effective and meaningful inside Murray Dranoff, but outside the organization it was opaque. Several attendees later commented that they had sympathized with the question "Why would the world be a less rich place if duo piano music disappeared completely?" What's so special about the duo piano? Who cares?

If you come to work every day for years, focused on duo piano issues, it's easy to forget that a lot of the world has never heard of the duo piano. It's easy to forget that you're the tapper and the world is the listener. The duo piano group was rescued from the Curse of Knowledge by a roomful of people relentlessly asking them, "Why?" By asking "Why?" three times, the duo piano group moved from talking about *what* they were doing to *why* they were doing it. They moved from a set of associations that had no power (except to someone who already knew duo piano music) to a set of deeper, more concrete associations that connected emotionally with outsiders.

This tactic of the "Three Whys" can be useful in bypassing the Curse of Knowledge. (Toyota actually has a "Five Whys" process for getting to the bottom of problems on its production line. Feel free to use as many "Whys" as you like.) Asking "Why?" helps to remind us of the core values, the core principles, that underlie our ideas.

...

A few years back, a group of hospital administrators asked the design firm IDEO to help improve the hospital's workflow. The team at IDEO knew that they would probably face a lot of internal resistance to their recommendations. The first step in motivating the hospital staff to change was to get them to realize that there was a problem and get them to care about it.

IDEO created a video, shot from the perspective of a patient who goes to the emergency room for a leg fracture. In the video, we see what the patient sees. We *are* the patient. We come in through the door to the ER—we hunt around for check-in instructions and interact with the admissions people, who are speaking in a foreign medical tongue. Eventually, we are laid on a gurney and wheeled through the hospital. We see long stretches of the hospital ceiling. We hear disembodied voices, because we can't see the person addressing us. Every now and then, someone pokes his or her head into our field of view. Frequently, there are long pauses where we just sit idle, staring at the ceiling, unsure what's coming next.

Jane Fulton Suri, a psychologist at IDEO, said that when the hospital staff was shown the video it had an immediate impact. “The first reaction was always something like ‘Oh, I never *realized* . . .’” Suri says she likes the word *realized*. Before the hospital workers saw the video, the problem wasn't quite *real*. Afterward, she said, “There's an immediate motivation to fix things. It's no longer just some problem on a problem list.”

IDEO also created role-playing exercises, putting the staffers in the patients' shoes. The exercises included such tasks as, “Imagine that you are French and you are trying to locate your father in the hospital, but you don't speak any English.” IDEO has become known for this type of simulation—simulations that drive employees to empathize with their customers. Time seems to erode empathy in some contexts, and IDEO's simulations manage to restore the natural empathy that we have for others. “The world of business tends to emphasize the pattern over the particular,” Suri said. “The intellectual aspects of the pattern prevent people from caring.”

...

This realization—that empathy emerges from the particular rather than the pattern—brings us back full circle to the Mother Teresa quote at the beginning of the chapter: “If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will.”

How can we make people care about our ideas? We get them to take off their Analytical Hats. We create empathy for specific individuals. We show how our ideas are associated with things that people already care about. We appeal to their self-interest, but we also appeal to their identities—not only to the people they are right now but also to the people they would like to be.

And, while we should always think about “what’s in it” for our audience, we should remember to stay clear of Maslow’s Basement. “What’s in it” for our audience might be aesthetic motivation or the desire for transcendence rather than a \$250 bonus. Floyd Lee said, “As I see it, I am not just in charge of food service; I am in charge of morale.” Who wouldn’t want a leader like Floyd Lee?